



Pierce County

Office of the County Executive

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February 21, 2012

RECEIVED

FEB 24 2012

Kevin J. Dayton, P.E., Region Administrator
Washington State Department of Transportation
Olympic Region
5720 Capitol Blvd.
Tumwater, WA 98504

Regarding: State Route 162 / Puyallup River Bridge Crossing / M. P. 6.8

Dear Kevin:

WSDOT has requested that Pierce County consider assuming ownership of the subject bridge. Letters and phone calls from your department ask the County to address two aspects of the bridge replacement project, i.e., both as a trail feature and as an emergency evacuation feature.

The Pierce County Foothills Trails adjacent to the subject project makes use of the existing steel railroad bridge to the west to cross the Puyallup River. Trail users are well served by the existing railroad bridge crossing. Additional trail capacity is not needed at this location. Also, our bridge inspection team is well versed on the conditions of this steel bridge and continues to inspect and maintain the bridge to appropriate standards. The state's adjacent concrete highway bridge, if transferred to the County, would represent additional structural maintenance costs, uncertainty, and liability for Pierce County.

Your staff also asked us to consider the value of the existing highway bridge as an emergency escape route out of the Orting area. As your staff has mentioned to us, the proposed replacement highway bridge will be wider and higher in elevation than the existing highway alignment. This new route and bridge will be one of the widest points along SR 162 and therefore, unlikely to create a travel constriction in the event of any needed evacuations. As such, we see no need for an adjacent parallel structure to serve evacuation purposes in the valley.

We should also mention the environmental benefits of removing the existing concrete highway bridge. Currently, the existing concrete bridge not only shades stream habitat but it constricts floodway flows in the Puyallup River. Both of these environmental constraints would be mitigated with removal of the existing bridge.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the subject project.

Sincerely,

Pat McCarthy
Pierce County Executive

cc: Kevin Phelps, Deputy County Executive
Pierce County Council
Brian Ziegler, PWU Director
Toby Rickman, PWU Deputy Director
Kathy Kravit-Smith, Pierce County Parks and Recreation
Steve Bailey, Pierce County Emergency Management
Harold Smelt, PWU, Surface Water Management Division
File

